



U10 Boys and U11/12 Boys

Learning To Train

To help yourself and your players/kids, sign up for the next Learning to Train coaching course. You'll have fun, make friends, get to know other CVUSC coaches, and gain leaps of confidence in running your own sessions!



The focus at this level is to have fun with the ball while learning fundamental movement and soccer skills. Shape over the ball and orientation around the ball are fundamental. We are still focused 80% on individual skill development but you will begin to introduce team shape and tactics. Most importantly, you will be inspiring a love of the game through FUN with our friends and a ball.

Technical Focus for the Learning to Train Stage

Throughout this stage, there is a continued focus on developing individual ball mastery while gradually developing combination and collective play. During this stage we spend 80% of our time on technical development. Team shape and an understanding of the smaller games (one vs one, two vs one, two vs two) within the larger games of 6v6, are introduced as a means to develop accuracy in our combination plays (give and goes, overlaps) collective play (shape on the field) and how to create or manipulate space (movements to cover in defense or penetrate in offense). We have 2 years at this stage of development so think of it in small meaningful steps towards an intended outcome for each focus described below. Again we **divide our focus between technical and tactical development throughout this stage at a ratio of 80% technical and 20% tactics.**

The focuses throughout this stage

1. **Ball Mastery** is an essential aim at this stage. We focus on developing the player's ability to control the ball through foundation dribbles, dribbling with different surfaces of the foot, changes of direction, cuts, feints, and tricks using the various control surfaces such as the foot thigh, chest and head. Super skill cuts and feints such as step overs, chops, scissors, shimmies, the Matthews and the coveted Maradona are all fair game at this stage of development and add a lot of fun to your practice. If you are looking for coaching support for teaching ball mastery please do not hesitate in contacting our VP of Development or VP of House to set up a Coach the Coach session.
2. **Receiving a ball or developing a good first touch** is essential at this stage. We focus on receiving the ball or collecting the ball with a controlled touch that keeps the ball in playing distance. We are also trying to create a body shape and ball orientation that allows for a good next move, such as a pass, shot or dribble. We are looking to develop the players ability to make good decisions when they have the ball (passing back, passing wide, passing to feet, or passing into the space ahead of their team mate. Players practice receiving the ball from a variety of angles of play to reproduce the basic triangle shape in team play. At this stage we explicitly teach, "Control, Look, Play." The look leads to a decision: in order, "Do I shoot? Do I dribble? Do I pass?" **THERE IS NO PLAY CALLED KICK IT AWAY!**
3. **First attacker** principles are introduced and developed through this stage: in a one vs one situation we look for a change of direction and change of pace, go straight at the defender and off balance them, head for goal. Here the Super Skills learned in Ball Mastery are applied to real game and one vs one situations where players develop their sense of timing and transition their technique into skill development under growing levels of opposition. Shooting technique is developed over short distances and we introduce the habit of reading the goalkeeper's position. We also introduce techniques for chipping the ball, bending the ball and volleying the ball. Shielding is a skill that is introduced and developed throughout this stage.
4. **Team Play and Tactics:** Throughout this stage we develop the players ability to play in combination with other players collectively with others towards a common goal. The movement and set up of two players per-

forming an overlap, an give and go, or other combination is introduced. The technical focus in these plays is still on accurate passing, good first touch receiving, and movement off the ball. Decisions in basic team passing are introduced in order for the team to keep possession: do I pass back, forward, or to the side. With this kind of focus we influence team shape (triangles and diamonds) and decision making (playing into or away from pressure). In terms of passing we are developing the ability to pass accurately with a push pass (inside of the foot) while introducing the drive (instep). By the end of this stage we are looking for players to discern when to pass to feet and when to pass into space. We also begin teaching players to read the game in terms of areas of pressure and areas of space so that they can learn how to keep possession of the ball as a team. Finally, we introduce the basic phases of play (we have the ball, they have the ball, we are getting the ball, we are losing the ball). Key to this whole focus is communication, “Morgan’s ball!” rather than, “Mine!”, “Help!” and, “Pass Back”

5. It is at this stage that we introduce and begin to work on the principles of **first defender**: jockeying and tackling. We also introduce and develop an understanding for the need to get goal side in conjunction with introducing the proper angles for marking and covering. We introduce varying levels of defensive pressure: high in the field to delay and regain possession, one to one marking in the penalty area, and how to mark on a throw in. Finally, we develop the idea of getting compact to prevent passes deep into your own end.

6. We introduce and throughout the two years we **develop the principle of depth of support** with a last player back who covers the back field and serves to support the players ahead. Specifically, we teach them about angles of distribution on the restart of play (i.e. goal kicks).

7. We introduce the role of **Goal Keeper**. This position is rotated throughout the team and everyone is given a chance to develop the skills of start position, side-skipping to get in line with the ball, moving forward to defend and make saves, gathering the ball, handling the ball at different heights (no high balls), and diving from a kneeling position and standing position. We practice throwing the ball out and rolling the ball out with one hand. We introduce the idea of Keeper supporting the defense in various positions, perhaps even high in the field. In practice and in warm-up the coach serves the ball so as to develop confidence so that children are not afraid of the ball. Incorporate player shooters who are practicing accuracy in shooting. Key to this stage of development is communication, “Keeper’s ball!” and the ability to start directing defensive players to support you in set plays.

8. Set plays are introduced with corners, throw ins, goal kicks, and the occasional free kick. Defensively, we are introducing how to mark and cover. Offensively we are looking at how and when to move in order to maintain possession and break through the defense.

Game Format (games are played once per week and consist of 2 x to 25 minute halves with a 5 minute half time)

The first and most important principle to reinforce throughout our games is for all of us to applaud and support individual technical play and brilliance. Even at this stage we certainly do not want to place a preference for passing over dribbling: we want kids to develop confidence taking on their opponents. Finally, kids must be absolutely free from ridicule or fear from performing any technical action which doesn't go right the first time. To this end, set up lots of technical goals for the kids during their games: feints, cuts, chops, tricks and simple combination plays.

For players U10 we play 6v6 including a keeper and at the U11/12 level we play 8V8 including a keeper. We are emphasizing individual technical play and we are encouraging kids to dribble and handle the ball. In terms of shape, we encourage the players to coordinate a basic diamond shape with players high, players wide and players deep throughout their play. Regardless of what system you use to set up your team we are looking for your players to begin to read the field well enough to recognize space.

At U10 - U11/12, games are called by young referees. While off-sides are generally not called we discourage players from adopting a cherry-picking approach to the game. Coaches are encouraged to interact with players and come out on the field to coach as the need arises for you to appropriately encourage the movement or positioning that you are after. Again, we are looking for you to encourage good soccer when you see it from either team your matches while applauding individual efforts to dribble and take people on in 1v1 situations.

Mercy Rule:

When your team is up 3 or more goals on the other team you now have an opportunity to coach and teach something new about the game with your players. In no particular order ...

1. The team that is down might add another player, or in the 6v6 game, the winning team might pull a player: your team is learning how to play numbers down and under pressure.
2. Winning team can hold players back in their defensive third of the field and send them in two at a time to delay the opposition: your players are learning individual skills, second defender skills, and the players who are being sent in later are learning to read the field - send them in to where they think the ball will go rather than where the ball is.
3. Winning team can change focus to "technical goals" like turns, cuts, feints, carrying the ball to a certain location and trying to pass to another player in a combination play: technical goals are all about reinforcing skills and tactical habits that you have been coaching all along.
4. Winning team's stronger players must play with a certain foot, or certain part of the foot: stronger players are being challenged to develop their own skill set.

5. In the course of the game you may attach conditions to shooting such as you must work the ball wide, up the field and then play the ball across the goal in order to score: you are now coaching a system of play that will shape their understanding for how the game can be played.
6. You may ask your forwards to pass back to an oncoming mid who takes a shot from further out in the field, or you may insist that all shots be taken outside of the box, or only from a wide angle; you are teaching kids to recognize shooting opportunities and helping them to practice longer range shooting.
7. You may teach your team to condense their defensive third and simply protect their lead: now you are playing good Italian football:)

Field Size:

For U10 you will have fields no bigger than 33m x 50m
and you will use the Midi 12' Goals for nets
with a size 4 ball

For U11/12 you will have fields no bigger than 50m x 70m
and you will use the Midi 18' Goals for nets
with a size 4 ball

Suggested Practice Format for players in the Learning to Train Stage of Development

Session Length: 60 - 75 minutes 1/week

Start with a warm-up that gets the kids going and naturally introduces your training theme for the session. It is always a good idea to touch on what you have worked on before as you start your session.

Example: Simon Says followed by Ship to Shore introducing the idea of quickly changing direction with the ball using the outside of the foot. (5 - 10 minutes)

Work on a specific technique

Example: Set up paired cones, one kid at each cone with a ball. When you say go they run towards another cone with their ball at their feet and cut back to return to their original cone. Increase the difficulty by calling “switch” while they are on their way to the cone. On “switch” the kids cut back and turn towards their original cone and then immediately cut back to continue to their new cone, cut back and turn to see if they can dribble back to their original cone before you call “switch” again. (10-15 minutes)

Progress to practicing the technique with some opposition

Example: Have kids dribble beside a partner and cut back to head towards their original cone, then cut back again quickly to head to the new cone trying to trick their partner as to which cone they are actually trying to get to. From here you might progress to short 1 v 1 battles to score in back to back nets set up in the centre of a 12m x 12m playing area: coach passes ball into the area, players battle it out to see who can score first. (10 - 15 minutes)

Go into a soccer like game with targets, directions, and conditions.

Example: Extend the previous game to add two more nets back to back in the centre of the area which is now 20m x 20m. Play 2v2 but add a neutral player who always plays attacker. Short bouts of this game consistently changing the neutral player. (10 - 15 minutes)

Play a small sided game.

Example: Play regular 4v4 in a 20m x 30m area. Outside of rewarding and encouraging great technical play you just let them play and limit your coaching. (10 - 20 minutes)

Conclude with a cool-down

Example: Play a round of Simon Says that transitions from whole body movements into some easy stretching. As you finish you can introduce ideas about nutrition, goal setting, hydration, or just comment on some of the great things you just say during your session. (5-10 minutes)

Alternate Learning to Train Stage of Development

Session Length: 60 - 75 minutes 1/week

Start with a warm-up that gets the kids going and naturally introduces your training theme for the session. It is always a good idea to touch on what you have worked on before as you start your session.

Example: Simon Says followed by Ship to Shore introducing the idea of quickly changing direction with the ball using the outside of the foot. (5 - 10 minutes)

Go into a soccer like game with targets, directions, and conditions.

Example: Play 4v4 but set up your field with 2 pairs of back to back nets in the centre of your 20m x 20m playing area. (10 - 15 minutes)

Work on a specific technique or skill.

Example: Your focus is on cutting back. Set up paired cones, one kid at each cone with a ball. When you say go they run towards another cone with their ball at their feet and cut back to return to their original cone. Increase the difficulty by calling “switch” while they are on their way to the cone. On “switch” the kids cut back and turn towards their original cone and then immediately cut back to continue to their new cone, cut back and turn to see if they can dribble back to their original cone before you call “switch” again. Another progression might have kids dribble beside a partner and cut back to head towards their original cone, then cut back again quickly to head to the new cone trying to trick their partner as to which cone they are actually trying to get to. A final progression might repeat the drill and add in a step-over before they cut back, or combine the cut back with other changes of direction such as a pull back. (15-20 minutes)

Play a small sided game.

Example: Play regular 4v4 in a 20m x 30m area. Outside of rewarding and encouraging great technical play you just let them play and limit your coaching. (10 - 20 minutes). (20 min)

Conclude with a cool-down

Example: Play a round of Simon Says that transitions from whole body movements into some easy stretching. As you finish you can introduce ideas about nutrition, goal setting, hydration, or just comment on some of the great things you just say during your session. (5-10 minutes)